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COUNTRY Colombia

DATE DISTR. 13 September 1948

SUBJECT    Remarks Made by the Minister of Government  
             Echandia

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Dr. Juan Francisco Mujica, Legal Adviser to the Communist Party of Colombia (PCC), stated at a recent meeting of the Executive Committee that he had been in conversation with Colombian Minister of Government Dario Echandia the previous day, 16 August 1948. He credited Echandia with the following statements concerning the Liberal Party:

1. The Liberal Party is currently split by internal schism caused by the personal ambitions and lack of foresight of Party leaders, especially Dr. Eduardo Santos. The recent appointment of Antonio Ordonez Ceballos to the position of Comptroller General demonstrates the internal disorganization of the Party and the political incapacity of its leaders. The Liberal Party should have supported and elected Hernan Isaias Ibarra to this post, which action would have caused the Conservative minority in the Assembly to resign. This would have left President Mariano Ospina Perez, a Conservative, presiding over a Government composed entirely of Liberal Party members. The President had reportedly categorically stated that he would resign should this occur. With the resignation of Ospina Perez, the Presidency would have been turned over to Santos, the "Primer Designado" (Vice-President), who is a Liberal, with conservative tendencies. Santos and the Liberal Congressmen would have been able to assure the triumph of their Party in the elections, since they would have had six months in power before calling new elections.
2. The dissension in the Liberal Party over the appointment of the Comptroller General may result in an electoral victory for the Conservative Party in the March 1949 elections. Echandia was apparently embittered by the attitude of the Liberal Party leaders, especially Santos, and expressed his intention of resigning from politics unless conditions improved in the near future.

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